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IN THIS ISSUE:

News Releases—

USDA Announces Results of CRP 11th Signup; 12th Signup Set for Jun 1992

USDA to Hold Agriculture Outlook '92 Conference Dec. 3-5

New Bagger Gets Apples to Market in Better Shape

USDA Looks to End Farmers' Paper Chase

USDA Settles Nine Animal Welfare Act Compliance Cases

Forgetful Kangaroo Rats Reseed the Nevada Desert

Tasty French Fries from New Spud Beat Industry Favorite

Background—

Packers and Stockyards Administration

News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

USDA ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF CRP 11TH SIGNUP; 12TH SIGNUP SET FOR JUNE 1992

WASHINGTON, Sept. 12—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced that 1.12 million acres have been tentatively accepted into the Conservation Reserve Program from the 2.35 million acres bid during the 11th CRP signup July 8-19. Total CRP enrollment is now 35.6 million acres.

Of the 1.12 million acres tentatively accepted, 66,151 are to be planted to trees. Secretary Madigan said CRP was modified by the 1990 Farm Bill to better address protection of environmentally sensitive croplands. “The approved acreage from the 11th signup will provide significant water quality benefits,” he said.

He also announced that the 12th CRP signup will be June 15-26, 1992. Bids accepted from the 12th signup will be effective for the 1993 crop year.

The new CRP acreage would be enrolled at an average cost of \$59.14 per acre. Payments will be effective for the 1992 crop year and the first rental payment will be made after Oct. 1, 1992.

The CRP was authorized by the 1985 Farm Bill to take highly erodible cropland out of agricultural production and place it into a conserving use. Program participants receive annual rental payments with the amounts depending on the per acre rental rate and the number of acres under contract.

Based upon final approval, 152,202 acres of land accepted from the 11th CRP signup will be retired in conservation priority watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound and the Great Lakes. Another 16,397 acres of land will be retired within watersheds targeted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state water quality agencies.

USDA estimates soil erosion will be reduced by an estimated 15 million tons per year on the land enrolled in the 11th signup.

Of the acres tentatively approved from the 11th signup, 20,674 acres are for useful life easements of 15 to 30 years. Of these 20,674 acres, 13,008 are for wildlife habitat improvement, 417 are for field windbreaks, 380 are for grassed waterways, 279 are for contour grass

strips, 3,738 are for salt tolerant grasses, 34 are for shelterbelts, and 26 are for living snow fences.

The following table provides detailed information, by state, on the 11th CRP signup:

National Summary	Number of Bids	Total Acres Bid	Bids Approved	Acres Approved	Average Annual Rental Payment Per Acre
Alabama	455	31,168	317	16,088	46.12
Alaska	8	993	0	0	0
Arizona	1	354	0	0	0
Arkansas	257	22,225	183	13,360	47.68
California	65	26,224	21	5,838	48.92
Colorado	336	96,423	56	14,634	36.66
Florida	181	10,512	75	4,148	40.69
Georgia	599	29,279	311	16,537	42.98
Idaho	285	59,623	189	38,081	49.78
Illinois	2,423	103,600	1,891	79,436	82.15
Indiana	1,065	51,009	897	41,981	79.96
Iowa	2,576	134,579	2,086	110,536	89.57
Kansas	1,844	177,660	609	43,424	53.51
Kentucky	264	15,922	203	11,362	62.78
Louisiana	107	7,319	76	5,047	45.37
Maine	18	819	7	433	54.69
Maryland	81	2,553	58	1,968	81.82
Michigan	1,526	80,503	1,019	52,413	59.37
Minnesota	1,301	85,487	890	59,140	53.22
Mississippi	772	61,183	580	43,851	46.55
Missouri	1,549	118,597	1,292	96,729	65.56
Montana	661	301,185	163	61,600	33.50
Nebraska	1,060	100,755	420	39,969	55.79
Nevada	2	1,442	0	0	0
New Jersey	5	173	1	20	34.00
New Mexico	28	7,192	4	2,445	33.28
New York	173	8,612	86	3,711	46.00

North Carolina	317	8,803	209	6,388	45.49
North Dakota	708	91,311	166	19,518	33.67
Ohio	1,384	76,267	1,106	56,988	78.11
Oklahoma	472	54,584	218	24,731	42.65
Oregon	71	15,932	32	8,306	48.47
Pennsylvania	380	15,855	117	4,345	60.63
South Carolina	337	14,742	158	6,436	40.71
South Dakota	590	101,340	167	13,168	39.83
Tennessee	469	24,524	355	19,069	52.12
Texas	1,245	229,617	590	93,855	39.24
Utah	37	6,321	4	285	39.96
Vermont	1	6	1	6	50.00
Virginia	188	5,288	94	2,187	53.52
Washington	255	49,627	191	37,799	57.13
West Virginia	5	141	0	0	0
Wisconsin	2,248	91,058	1,607	64,642	62.17
Wyoming	65	31,013	1	588	25.75
Total	26,414	2,351,824	16,450	1,121,063	59.14

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USDA TO HOLD AGRICULTURE OUTLOOK '92 CONFERENCE DEC. 3-5

WASHINGTON, Sept. 13—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold "Agriculture Outlook '92," the 68th annual outlook conference, Dec. 3-5 at its Washington, D.C., headquarters, Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan announced today.

"Top officials and industry experts will discuss prospects for farmers and consumers, the latest policy changes and recent world developments," Madigan said.

In order to make the conference immediately accessible, it will be televised live via satellite on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 9:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. EST, and Thursday, Dec. 5, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EST.

Madigan will open Agriculture Outlook on Tuesday morning. He will discuss challenges for U.S. agriculture and constructive solutions that balance needs of farmers, consumers and the environment.

Other top government officials will present the 1992 farm and economic outlook and discuss solutions for environmental dilemmas.

Tuesday afternoon will focus on trade negotiations and changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. A discussion of how programs under the new farm bill are working will follow. Satellite viewers will be able to phone in questions to officials during this session.

Concurrent sessions beginning Tuesday afternoon and continuing Wednesday, Dec. 4, will cover 1992 prospects for all major commodities and a number of timely topics ranging from the impact of clean air and water legislation to the health of rural America's elderly.

Wednesday events will not be transmitted over satellite. On Thursday, Dec. 5, the program and satellite transmission begin 8:30 a.m. EST when Secretary Madigan opens a morning-long nutrition program. Featured will be progress toward new food labeling rules; innovations in the school lunch, food stamp, and the Women, Infants and Children programs; and new information on food nutrients.

A concurrent session Thursday morning will highlight national and local strategies for rural development and trends in the rural economy. The conference concludes at 12:30 p.m. EST, Thursday.

New features for conference-goers this year will include a central hospitality area, refreshment breaks and exhibits on USDA and its programs.

In a departure from previous years, a registration fee will be charged to attend the conference. The \$45 fee includes the published proceedings or four 90-minute audiotapes, a reception hosted by Secretary Madigan Tuesday evening and coffee breaks during the conference. A reduced fee of \$25 will be charged to Thursday-only attendees.

For details on the program, registration and the satellite broadcast, telephone (202) 447-3050, or write Outlook Conference, room 5143-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-3900.

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NEW BAGGER GETS APPLES TO MARKET IN BETTER SHAPE

WASHINGTON—The journey from orchard to supermarket may become a less bruising experience for apples, thanks to a new fruit bagging machine designed by U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers.

“Our research has found that the bagging operation causes more bruises than any other apple handling operation conducted between the orchard and local grocery store,” said co-inventor Dale Marshall of USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

The new machine reduces the amount of bruising in Golden Delicious apples by 93 percent, Marshall said. The system has been dubbed the “low-damage automatic apple bagger.” ARS has filed a patent application on the system, and it is available to industry for licensing.

Studies of the 1986-87 Michigan apple crop indicated that on average, 91 to 95 percent of a 3-pound bag of apples were battered, said Marshall, an agricultural engineer in the ARS Fruit and Vegetable Harvesting unit at East Lansing, Mich. The average apple had approximately three bruises.

“The new machine will allow packinghouses to maintain the standards needed for apples to be labeled with the U.S. Extra Fancy grade,” said Marshall. “That means there will be no more than one bruise per apple and a battered area of no more than 0.2 square inch.”

Conventional baggers gather apples in a pan that is inclined at about a 10-degree angle. The filled pan is tipped to nearly a 60-degree angle to dump the apples into a plastic bag, causing the fruit to collide and bruise.

To reduce these collisions, Marshall and others changed the angle of the collecting pan to nearly horizontal and covered the pan with a bag. After apples roll into the pan, the pan-bag combination is tipped until it is almost vertical and then is encased by a cushioned box.

The box holds the apples in place as the pan is removed, allowing the apples to settle, but not fall. The box moves the bag to a closing device and the closed bag slides away.

Earlier this year, the system received favorable reviews after it was tested under commercial conditions at a Belding, Mich., packing plant.

However, the new bagger fills only about seven bags per minute compared with the industry average of 10. Marshall is optimistic that additional research will bring the bagger up to speed.

Modifications to existing commercial apple bagging machines also could help reduce bruising. Before developing the new bagger, Marshall modified a machine made by Powell Manufacturing of Faber, Va.

Marshall first reduced the dumping angles of the collecting pan and bag holder. Key surfaces of the bagger were padded to soften the blows as apples moved through the bagging process. Those changes reduced bruising by 80 percent, Marshall said.

A report on the new low-damage bagging system appears in the August issue of Agricultural Research magazine, the monthly publication of the Agricultural Research Service.

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Issued: September 16, 1991

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USDA LOOKS TO END FARMERS' PAPER CHASE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16—Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan today announced a test program designed to improve services and significantly reduce the amount of red tape and paperwork farmers face when doing business with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The secretary said eight pilot projects in 15 different locations throughout the country would be in operation in time for the spring 1992 farm program sign up activities. The projects, called "Easy Access," are the result of a series of consultations USDA officials have held with producers around the country.

"When I came aboard as secretary, I told President Bush and the Congress that part of my mission would be to make it easier for farmers to be farmers," Madigan said. "Today we are formally launching 'Easy Access' to reduce the bureaucratic hurdles that get in the way of this nation's farmers and ranchers."

Last June a task force comprised of five USDA agencies—the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation and the Office of Information Resources Management—met for two days and produced about 70 ideas for improving department service to producers.

"We winnowed through these ideas and chose the eight projects we're announcing today for further review. This review took place at five

different locations around the country and was conducted by task force members working with local USDA county office staff members and about 90 farmers,” Madigan said. “The local input helped us decide which of the nearly 70 ideas were most valid and how they could best be implemented.

“This is a customer driven program,” Madigan said.

One project, to be conducted in Rockingham County, Va., uses imaging technology to provide maps of agricultural areas with on-screen visual overlays of farmers’ fields, contrasting highly erodible areas with rotational planting patterns. Farmers will be able to visualize immediately the impact of various planting options to help determine what lands to allocate to the Conservation Reserve Program.

Another technological project, set for Terrell County, Ga., and Wright County, Iowa, will test the use of programmable “smart cards” with microprocessors to enable USDA agencies to share producer information electronically and securely, rather than dealing with the physical transfer of paper documents.

“At the conclusion of each pilot project, task force teams will evaluate effectiveness, appropriateness and costs versus benefits. They will report their findings and recommendations to me around this time next year so we can then decide which ones are feasible for national application,” Madigan said.

Other pilot projects and their test sites are:

—Personnel scheduling in Logan and Mason Counties, Ill.; Wake County, N.C.; Barnes County, N.D.; Seneca County, Ohio; Adams County, Wash. Project will identify ways to serve customers better through extended and varied work hours.

—Personal computer availability in Sherman County, Kan. and Bolivar County, Miss. Computer linkage will be developed to facilitate communications and data sharing between USDA agencies. Farmers with their own computers will have remote access to USDA computers.

—Video conference in Hale County, Texas; and a county yet to be chosen; and nationwide. Secretary of agriculture will meet with farmers via satellite broadcast video conference to explain programs and receive direct feedback from program participants.

—“800” telephone service in Sussex County, Del. An 800 line will be used to eliminate toll charges for farmers.

—Facsimile communication in Fresno County, Calif. and New Hampshire. FAX technology will be used to expand communications capabilities.

—Form simplification in Cache County, Utah and Franklin Parish, La. Project will identify common data elements and definitions in order to create standard forms to share among USDA agencies.

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SDA SETTLES NINE ANIMAL WELFARE ACT COMPLIANCE CASES

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17—The U.S. Department of Agriculture settled nine cases between May 21 and July 20 to enforce the humane care and treatment of animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act.

Robert B. Melland, acting administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the cases resulted from charges of violating The Animal Welfare Act and regulations.

Animal dealers, breeders, transportation companies, exhibitors and research facilities must be licensed or registered under the law. USDA makes periodic, unannounced inspections to insure compliance. Action is taken against violators if efforts to secure compliance are unsuccessful.

The following individuals or businesses were ordered to stop violating the Animal Welfare Act and received civil penalties, license suspensions or license revocations. These cease-and-desist orders include requirements for specific actions that the parties must take. The parties did not admit or deny that they violated the regulations but agreed to the issuance of a consent decision in settlement of the case. Details of the penalties and charges are as follows:

—Buckshire Corporation, an animal dealer in Perkasie, Pa., fined 2,000. Buckshire was charged with failing to provide 12 Rhesus monkeys with adequate space, necessary care and observation during transport from Pennsylvania to Michigan.

—Animal exhibitor Lyle W. Rice, Wimauma, Fla., five-year license suspension. Rice was charged with failing to provide an elephant with prompt veterinary care and humane treatment.

—Animal exhibitor David Rios Rivera, doing business as Cafeteria and Auto Part El Ancia, Vega, Baja, P.R., fined \$1,000. Rivera was charged

with operating without a license and failing to provide animals with sufficient housing, food and water, sanitation and veterinary care. Rivera also was charged with failing to maintain records showing acquisition, disposition and identification of the animals.

—Animal dealer Stephen Patrick Forest, Bandera, Texas, 90-day license suspension. Forest was charged with failing to handle 25 zoo animals humanely, and failing to provide the animals with adequate veterinary care and observation during transport from Florida to Texas. Three animals died during capture or transport.

—Animal exhibitor David Sabo, Amenia, N.Y., fined \$2,000. Sabo was charged with transporting and exhibiting animals without a license.

—Animal dealer Bill Lee, Maynard, Ark., fined \$5,000. Lee was charged with selling 150 dogs without a license.

—American Airlines, Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, fined \$4,000. The airline was charged with accepting animals in cages without posted food and water instructions; accepting animals in cages without live animal labels and arrows or markings indicating the upright position of the container; and accepting animal cages without sufficient amounts of litter. The airline also was charged with failing to obtain a written guarantee for cash on delivery expenses for transporting, feeding, holding and housing animals, and failing to handle animals carefully.

—Animal dealer Frederick A. Weston, doing business as Circle W Rabbitry, Undershill, Vt., five-year license revocation. Weston was charged with failing to provide rabbits with sufficient housing, food, water, sanitation and veterinary care. Weston also was charged with failing to maintain records of acquisition, disposition, description and identification of the rabbits.

—Animal dealer Cheryl Woods, Wellman, Iowa, 10-year license revocation. Woods was charged with failing to provide dogs with sufficient housing, shelter, food, water, sanitation and ventilation. Woods also was charged with failing to maintain records that identified each animal.

The Animal Welfare Act requires that the care and treatment of certain animals be provided according to standards established by APHIS. Animals protected by the law must be provided adequate housing, handling, sanitation, food, water, transportation, veterinary care and protection against extremes of weather and temperature. The regulations also provide for the exercise of dogs and a physical environment adequate to promote the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates. The law

covers animals that are sold as pets at the wholesale level, used for biomedical research or used for exhibition purposes.

APHIS enforces the Animal Welfare Act primarily by conducting inspections and through administrative prosecutions when warranted. Many of these cases are resolved through the consent decision provision of the regulations. Under these provisions, USDA and the party named in the complaint agree to a hearing before an administrative law judge, who issues a decision. Any party may appeal this decision to the USDA judicial officer. The respondent may appeal an adverse decision by the judicial officer to the U.S. Court of Appeals. Failure to respond to the charges in the complaint results in the issuance of a default order by the administrative law judge who assesses penalties.

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FORGETFUL KANGAROO RATS RESEED THE NEVADA DESERT

WASHINGTON—Kangaroo rats in Nevada's Great Basin are reseeding native grasses on the parched desert—whenever they have a memory lapse.

At night, when it's cooler, kangaroo rats gather native grass seeds and dig shallow holes to store them, says William S. Longland of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"But sometimes they forget where they stash them," he says.

One of the rat's favorite foods is Indian ricegrass seed. Over 100 years ago, Paiute and Shoshone tribes collected the seed for food—as do the furry, tan kangaroo rats today.

Caches of Indian ricegrass seed forgotten by the animals appear to be the primary source of new ricegrass seedlings in the desert, says Longland, an animal ecologist at the Landscape Ecology of Rangelands Research Unit in Reno, Nev., operated by USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Plant seeds are dispersed by wind, water and animals. But the round seeds of ricegrass are heavy. They lack lightweight appendages that, on other seeds, act as wings to catch the wind.

So, Longland says, the rats have a role in spreading the seed.

“We’re just beginning to understand the complex interaction between native plants and animal communities in the desert,” says James A. Young, research leader of the Reno lab.

“In this desert environment, anything that gives a forage plant a survival edge can add food for livestock and wildlife, plus vegetation as a buffer against erosion,” Young says.

He says the ricegrass has an “extensive root system that helps it stabilize land that’s been overgrazed, burned or mined.”

Scientists at the Reno station found earlier that seeds of ricegrass germinate better if they have been inside the rat’s cheek pouch.

Why this happens isn’t clear, Longland says, but he has found two types of beneficial fungi in their cheek pouches. One of them, saprophytic fungi, may promote seed germination, while the other, mycorrhizal fungi, help plant roots get nutrients.

If the size of kangaroo rat populations in an area and the soil characteristics are known, “it would help tell how well Indian ricegrass would grow when planted for forage,” Longland says. Another payoff: being able to predict how well the environment can recover from a range fire.

As the rats forage, they use small front paws to stuff several hundred seeds in each cheek pouch. They initially store most of the seeds in a practice known as “scatterhoarding.” But they return days or weeks later to dine on their seed stash.

Longland says that in recent years the Reno studies suggest the rats and the ricegrass evolved together through some interdependent relationship.

As an example, the rats apparently depend on seeds for water as well as food. Longland says the animal is able to extract water from seeds while digesting them.

One afternoon, to find out where the rats hide their seeds, he put out piles of seeds dusted with a harmless, powdered fluorescent dye. That night, as kangaroo rats collected seeds, they left a trail of dye.

The next night, Longland returned with an ultraviolet light. He could see fluorescent trails crisscrossing through the sand, leading him to the seed hoards.

Currently, he’s discovering more about how the rats distribute their seed stashes and how they recover their buried hoards by their sense of smell. But despite tricks like fluorescent dye, the rat is slow to give up its entrepreneurial secrets.

“We would expect them to find 100 seeds more easily than one, but they don’t,” he says. “They seem to be just as adept at recovering a single buried seed as a buried pile of 100 seeds.”

Julie Corliss (415) 559-6069

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TASTY FRENCH FRIES FROM NEW SPUD BEAT INDUSTRY FAVORITE

WASHINGTON—Crisp french fries made from a new U.S. Department of Agriculture potato variety were favored over Russet Burbank in taste tests by USDA and university scientists.

A panel of trained taste testers scored Ranger Russet fries higher in flavor, color and texture than Russet Burbank, the most widely planted variety in the United States, said potato breeder Joseph J. Pavek of USDA’s Agricultural Research Service in Aberdeen, Idaho.

“For flavor,” Pavek said, “Ranger fries scored a 5.9 out of a possible 10, while the Burbanks scored a 4.3” in taste tests performed by scientists in Minnesota and North Dakota.

Also, the new fries were rated as having a crisper texture than Russet Burbank. “That’s mainly because Ranger potatoes are 10 percent higher in solids, or dry matter, than Burbank,” Pavek said. French fries with higher solids are more likely to absorb less oil during frying and droop less after they are served, he said.

Pavek and ARS plant pathologist Dennis L. Corsini selected and bred Ranger Russet at the agency’s Small Grains and Potato Germplasm Research Unit in Aberdeen. The new variety was released to growers this spring.

Local potato processors, like J.R. Simplot Co., in Caldwell, Idaho, which provides about 60 percent of the fries sold at McDonald’s nationwide, worked with the ARS scientists to evaluate Ranger potatoes and french fries. Other collaborators were university, Cooperative Extension and industry scientists in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Colorado.

Pavek sent harvested potatoes to the ARS Potato Handling, Storage and Processing Research Unit, East Grand Forks, Minn. There, scientists

prepared frozen french fries shipped to the University of North Dakota, Fargo, for the taste tests.

Potato processors also like the size of the new spuds, which weigh in at about 7 ounces, compared to an average 6 ounces for Russet Burbanks. Bigger potatoes mean less waste when they are cut into long, skinny fries, according to Glenn Vogt, manager of agricultural services at Simplot.

Ranger resembles Russet Burbank in appearance but usually out yields it by about 28 percent, said Pavek.

Ranger potatoes are susceptible to blackspot—the formation of grey or black spots under the skin of tubers bruised during harvest, he said.

However, Corsini said future breeding work with bruise-resistant potatoes can remedy that problem for tomorrow's new varieties.

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Background

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION

The Packers and Stockyards Act was signed into law on Aug. 15, 1921, giving the secretary of agriculture authority to regulate livestock marketing activities at public stockyards and the operations of meat packers. The law also authorized the U.S. Department of Agriculture to regulate the rates of stockyard operators and market agencies at the stockyards, and to issue reparation awards for monetary damages for violations of the law.

As a result of this legislation, which resulted from years of concern about anticompetitive activities among meat packers, the Packers and Stockyards Administration was established Sept. 6, 1921.

The agency's overall mission is to assure fair trade practices and competitive markets for livestock, meat, and poultry. Particular attention also is given to protecting consumers and the industry against unfair business practices that can unduly affect meat and poultry distribution and prices.

To achieve this mission, P&SA fosters fair and open competition in the marketing of livestock, meat and poultry; guards against deceptive and fraudulent practices that increase costs to consumers and reduces income to producers; and provides payment protection to those marketing livestock, meat and poultry. The agency also certifies central filing systems established by states to provide clear title information for farm products.

P&SA has a packer and poultry division, a livestock marketing division, an industry analysis staff, and 12 regional offices. P&SA's staff of 187 oversees programs at nearly 25,000 businesses, including 6,500 slaughtering and processing packers, and 6,900 meat wholesalers, distributors, brokers, and dealers. There are also more than 7,100 livestock marketing agencies and dealers, 275 poultry firms, over 2,400 packer buyers, and 1,618 stockyards subject to the P&SA regulations and oversight.

The agency employs agricultural marketing specialists, auditors, and industrial specialists who conduct financial audits and investigations, assemble investigative files, serve as expert witnesses, and check the accuracy of weighing scales.

Regional Offices are located in Atlanta, Ga., Bedford, Va., Denver, Colo., Ft. Worth, Texas, Indianapolis, Ind., Lenexa, Kan., Lancaster, Pa., Memphis, Tenn., Omaha, Neb., Portland, Ore., Sacramento, Calif., and South St. Paul, Minn.

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